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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

12 August 1966

STAFF NOTE

SUBJECT: The Dominican Republic: Balaguer Belling the Cat
(ONE Distribution Only)

NOTE TO THE BOARD

[] has suggested that the attached would be
useful subject matter for a Board discussion. We deal here
only with the aspect of the Dominican situation which we
regard as most worrisome for the short-run future. A good
general wrap-up, produced by OCI on 5 August, is available
in the Reading Room.

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1. The first six weeks of President Balaguer's term of office have passed calmly. The next six weeks will probably be less calm, and the period after late September -- when the last of the Inter-American Peace Force (IAPF) is scheduled to leave -- may become very tense indeed.

2. Balaguer has now made clear by his actions that he meant what he said about undertaking a transformation of the military establishment. In changes aimed at reducing the power of ultra-conservatives in the officer corps, he has ordered the transfer into the army of some air force ground combat troops and has directed that the tank force be shifted from one command to another. He has replaced the chief of police with a trusted associate. He has also chosen as his own military aide an ambitious officer who is generally considered a Trujilloist and is

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regarded with suspicion by the defense minister and the service chiefs -- all appointees of Provisional President Garcia Godoy. These moves by Balaguer seem to be only preliminary to more extensive -- and more delicate -- changes.

3. The Dominican military establishment* is certainly not the throw-back, gorilla outfit it was in Trujillo's time; neither has it suddenly become a collection of honest, dutiful, imaginative, cleancut, loyal professionals. The persistence of the old ways has been illustrated by tough Tony Imbert's recent cycle of visits (clearly for no good purpose) to various military establishments. It has also been shown by the behavior of an air force major in the town of Barahona who last weekend arrested the secretary-general and several other members of Juan Bosch's Dominican Revolutionary Party; the major evidently figured that if these folk weren't the same as Communists, they were just as dangerous.

4. Balaguer obviously realizes that there is some risk in the course he has embarked upon; he has not committed himself to

* This is a big establishment in a small country. Total number of military personnel is nearly 19,000. In addition, there is the National Police with about 8,500.

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any specific blueprint or time-table. He has, however, indicated his hope of accomplishing far-reaching changes in the military before the IAPF departs. We see two points of concern here: one is that he may be over-optimistic about how far and fast he can go without provoking a dangerous reaction; the other is that implementing some changes of the sort he seems to have in mind would likely require more than five or six weeks.

5. Elements in the military are bound to become restive as they see not only their numbers, but also their privileges and prerogatives, cut back. Moreover, with the departure of the IAPF, the extreme left is likely to renew activity, including the perpetration of violent incidents, and certain of the military leaders may want to move more forcefully than Balaguer deems appropriate against leftist groups. In sum, we think there will inevitably be some danger of a military coup attempt and that this danger might abruptly increase -- if, for instance, Wessin y Wessin or certain of the rebel military officers who have been sent abroad suddenly reappeared on the Dominican scene.

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